

Isaiah 17:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim.

Analysis

The imagery shifts to harvest: 'as when the harvestman gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm.' This depicts thorough gleaning—the harvester's arm gathering grain completely. Then: 'as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim.' The Valley of Rephaim, near Jerusalem, was known for bountiful harvests. The metaphor indicates Assyria will thoroughly harvest (conquer and deport) Israel as completely as a skilled harvester gathers grain. Nothing will be left standing. This agricultural metaphor would powerfully communicate to an agrarian society—they understood complete harvest meant storage or removal of everything valuable.

Historical Context

The Valley of Rephaim (southwest of Jerusalem) was a fertile area mentioned in David's battles against Philistines (2 Samuel 5:17-25). Its reputation for abundant harvests made it an apt metaphor for thorough conquest. Assyrian deportation policies resembled complete harvesting—systematically removing population to prevent rebellion and repopulate with foreigners. Sargon II's annals boast of thorough conquests: '27,290 people...I carried away.' The harvest metaphor precisely described Assyrian methodology—systematic, thorough, leaving little behind.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does harvest imagery teach about the thoroughness of divine judgment?
2. How does God's use of Assyria as 'harvester' demonstrate sovereignty over pagan empires?
3. In what ways is Assyria's role as judgment instrument both fulfilling God's purposes and facing later judgment?

Interlinear Text

וְאִסְרֵּל וּבְנֵי הָ	קָצֵר יְ	קָטֵת הָ
H1961 gathereth	And it shall be as when the harvestman	the corn
H622	H7105	H7054
		H2220

שְׁבָل יְ	כְּמַלְקֵט	וְאִסְרֵל וּ
ears	and reapeth	and it shall be as he that gathereth
H7641	H7114	H1961
		H3950
		H7641

בְּעֵמֶל:	רַפְאִים:
in the valley	of Rephaim
H6010	H7497

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 13:30 (Parallel theme): Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Jeremiah 51:33 (Parallel theme): For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of Babylon is like a threshingfloor, it is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come.

Joel 3:13 (Parallel theme): Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great.

2 Samuel 5:18 (Parallel theme): The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

2 Samuel 5:22 (Parallel theme): And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

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